

**To:** Press[Press@epa.gov]; Purchia, Liz[Purchia.Liz@epa.gov]  
**From:** Robert Daguillard  
**Sent:** Mon 8/17/2015 11:10:52 PM  
**Subject:** EOC Action: is this new? EPA IG investigation into mine waste breach?

FYI

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** "Kaul, Gitika A." <Gitika.A.Kaul@abc.com>  
**Date:** August 17, 2015 at 5:50:47 PM EDT  
**To:** "Daguillard.Robert@epa.gov" <Daguillard.Robert@epa.gov>  
**Cc:** "Carden, Dee W." <Dee.W.Carden@abc.com>  
**Subject:** Fwd: is this new? EPA IG investigation into mine waste breach?

Hi Robert- is this from today? Pls advise soonest.

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** "Carden, Dee W." <Dee.W.Carden@abc.com>  
**Date:** August 17, 2015 at 5:45:06 PM EDT  
**To:** "Kaul, Gitika A." <Gitika.A.Kaul@abc.com>  
**Subject:** is this new? EPA IG investigation into mine waste breach?

-US--MineWasteLeak

BC-US--Mine Waste Leak, 2nd Ld-Writethru,671

EPA watchdog investigating toxic mine spill in Colorado

AP Photo COBL105, COBL104

Eds: Updates with EPA response, other details. Adds contributor lines. With AP Photos.

By MATTHEW DALY

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) -- The inspector general for the Environmental Protection Agency is investigating the cause of a massive spill from an abandoned Colorado gold mine that unleashed 3 million gallons of contaminated wastewater into rivers that supply water to at least three states.

The inspector general's office said the investigation also will focus on the EPA's response to the Aug. 5 spill from the defunct Gold King Mine near Silverton, Colo.

EPA and contract workers accidentally unleashed 3 million gallons of contaminated wastewater as they inspected the idled mine. The spill released heavy metals such as arsenic, cadmium, lead and mercury into a tributary of the Animas River, turning the river sickly yellow and raising concerns about long-term environmental damage.

The spill affected rivers that supply water for drinking, recreation and irrigation in Colorado, New Mexico and Utah as well as the Navajo Nation.

A diluted toxic plume reached Lake Powell, a huge reservoir 300 miles downstream that feeds the Colorado River and supplies water to the Southwest.

The inspector general's office said the investigation comes in response to a congressional request.

Lawmakers from both parties have criticized the EPA's response as slow and overly cautious. Leaders of oversight committees in both the House and Senate say they are planning hearings after Congress returns from its August recess.

EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy has said her agency takes full responsibility for the accident and expressed deep sorrow for the environmental harm caused to the Animas and San Juan rivers.

McCarthy traveled to Colorado and New Mexico last week following bipartisan pressure from congressional delegations in the two states. Lawmakers from Utah, Arizona and other Western states also have blasted the EPA for a response many call insufficient.

"Among the most basic and simple questions that Coloradans want answered after the Gold King Mine spill are, 'What is in the water?' and 'Is it safe?'" Sen. Michael Bennet, D-Colo., said last week.

Bennet called the EPA's initial response to the spill "too slow and inadequate" and said testing for water quality and sediment levels was proceeding too slowly.

A spokeswoman for the EPA declined to comment Monday. But McCarthy said in Colorado last week that her agency will conduct internal reviews and hire an outside agency to conduct an independent review.

"No agency could be more upset about the incident happening, more dedicated about doing our job and getting this right," McCarthy said. Mine remediation operations throughout the country are being scrutinized to ensure they are being safely performed, she said.

There are about 500,000 abandoned mines nationwide. The EPA has estimated the cost of cleaning up abandoned mines nationwide, not including coal mines, at between \$20 billion and \$54 billion.

Officials in New Mexico have lifted water restrictions for the Animas and San Juan rivers imposed after the spill. The San Juan flows into the Animas and also was polluted.

Colorado has reopened the Animas River to boating, while Utah has allowed San Juan River water to be used for crop irrigation and livestock.

Meanwhile, the EPA released new data for contamination in the San Juan River between Farmington and Shiprock, New Mexico.

The highest sample for total lead was 250 parts per billion on Aug. 8 west of Farmington, where the San Juan flows into Navajo lands, the agency said. That's five times the federal drinking water standard for humans.

The Navajo Nation is waiting for test results from its own Environmental Protection Agency before deciding whether to declare the San Juan River safe for use. Navajo President Russell Begaye has advised tribal members not to let livestock drink from the river and to shut off irrigation systems fed by the river, but the tribe has not physically barred anyone from accessing the water.

Spokesman Mihio Manus said officials have drawn samples from the part of the river that runs through the northern portion of the reservation, but he wasn't sure when tests would be complete.

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Associated Press writers Felicia Fonseca in Flagstaff, Arizona, and Michael Besecher in Washington contributed to this report.

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*Dee Carden*

*ABC News Washington Assignment Desk*

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